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Bob Dylan: The Prophet of Social Change in the 1960s

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The 1960s was a period of social change in countries around the world and in hundreds of cities in the United States. We argue that music played a rhetorical role in bringing a vast array of people together behind a wide range of issues. The music of Bob Dylan unified people together, making Dylan a kind of prophet that put into music the voice of the people involved in the social movements of the 1960s. By considering his music rhetorically, we provide insight into how music played a key role in the social movements of the 1960s.

Keywords: social movement theory, Bob Dylan, music as rhetoric

August 28 of 1963 is an iconic day. From the Lincoln Memorial, Peter, Paul, and Mary sang "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and "Blowin' In the Wind" to those gathered by the thousands for the March on Washington. The day was marked by Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech. *The New York Times* coverage of the Civil Rights national march on Washington, D.C. focused on King's words; the article misspelled the name of an unknown songwriter "Bob Dillion," who had written songs that had moved the audience that day. In fact, it would be the folksinger Bob Dylan who catalyzed the social upheaval of the 1960s and created a prophetic prolepsis of what could, and would happen to a post World War II "jeremiad" paradigm of social consensus.[1]

Music was an integral part of the social change and turmoil that defined the 1960s. "Rock and roll and its dances were the opening wedge," points out Gitlin, "hollowing out the cultural ground beneath the tranquil center.'"[2] Radio made rock 'n roll music something youth around the world could share, notes Kaiser. While the Beatles were the craze, explains Kaiser, Bob Dylan was ""the modern master" of music.[3] Lynsky calls Dylan the "prophet" for disaffected youth.[4] The tenure of music in the 1960s was to create a better world, writes Chenoweth. The goal of the music was to leave the insanity of the real world to create a new reality through the music.[5] For example, Maraniss reports soldiers in Vietnam singing the latest music while in the field, from albums of Jefferson Airplane, Buffalo Springfield, Big Brother & the Holding company to the Beatles and the Sgt. Pepper album.[6] "For many students, political protest can become the covering activity that conveys a sense of importance, power, exhilaration, and danger, all feeling related to self-affirmation and expression," explains Gregg.[7]

The student movement in the U.S. began by wanting to "transform American society inside-out," said Sale.[8] To Windt, protesters in the early 60s accepted "the legitimacy of existing institutions and ask mainly that leaders change particular policies regarding issues dissidents are agitated about."[9] But by 1968, argues Sale, the radicals no longer

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believed that changing the processes was enough because many of them came to believe that only revolution would change the world.[10] Kaiser agrees that 1968 was the climatic year: "In 1968 the creativity of rock was pushed over the top by an unprecedented diversity, a cross-cultural exchange that was simultaneously racial, sexual, musical, and multinational."[11] The "grace and civility" that marked demonstrations earlier in the decade ended in 1968, writes Kulansky. He points out how the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the police response to demonstrators at the Democratic Party National Convention in Chicago, and tanks rolling into Prague were indicators that further change would not come through reform of the system.[12]

One result of the cultural transformation was a change in rhetoric. Burke called the changes in rhetoric transformational rhetoric. He believed that rhetoric was more than an act of persuasion, but could include other cultural artifacts that convinced people to accept new beliefs.[13] Schiappa agrees, "For better or for worse, there was a confluence of changing rhetorical practices, expanding rhetorical theories, and opportunities for rhetorical criticism." Eventually, the Vietnam War was considered a rhetorical practice, concludes Schiappa.[14] Rhetoric had to change, points out Lucas, because "Words became weapons in the cultural conflict that divided America."[15] The language of the new youth ideology was long hair, colorful clothing, casual behavior, the search for fun and excitement, argues Klimke. He continues, "New aesthetics emerging in art, music, film, and fashion joined with hippie ideologies and lifestyles and merged into a new set of symbolic forms, attractive to the young generation in both the East and West."[16]

Kutschke and Norton argue that music was an irrefutable link among the elements of cultural change in the 1960s. As they explain, "the stylistic qualities of the music and associated codes of behavior and appearance, in binding the young and alienating adults, formed a rich expressive means of rebellion that rendered political organizations, campaigns and manifesto-led activism irrelevant."[17] Dylan was a leader in these rhetorical processes because his folk-rock style of music "intensified the genre by using words and phrases to create clear images of social and political protest," explains Comotois.[18] "Musicking often represents those shared beliefs that allow 'disparate strangers' to feel they are indeed a band of brothers and sisters, and reinforces those beliefs when much of the world is working to break them down," write Rosenthal and Flacks.[19]

Bob Dylan served as a prophet because his songs provided the rhetorical glue that brought together a widely disparate and dispersed movement. Dylan's music was a rhetorical vision uniting listeners as they emotionally responded to songs and lyrics. We will connect those lyrics that challenged people to participate in social change to the process of social change. Bob Dylan is a case study in the role of a prophet for the avocation of social change. Accordingly, we can formulate the rhetorical role of a prophet as the voice of social movements.

Creating any social movement is difficult when the focus is on a single local issue, much less a long and multi-dimensional social movement as occurred in the 1960s, which makes the 1960s an interesting case study for processes of social change and the role of rhetoric in social change processes. The Civil Rights movement carried over into the 1960s from *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954, 347 U.S. 483) and the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. The increasing role of the U.S. military in the War in Vietnam after Lyndon Johnson became president in 1963 led to demonstrations against the war and against the draft. Plus, there were university demonstrations against the military industrial complex that created the weapons of war. College students demanded a greater role in the administration of universities. There were demonstrations against the Vietnam War, against

national governments, and about local issues in France, Spain, Mexico, Italy, Poland, Brazil, Great Britain, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Yugoslavia, and Jamaica. To Farik, (2004) "the protesters shared strong rebellious and revolutionary visions and the feeling that profound changes were possible and taking place with the protest movements in other regions of the world."[20] The 1960s were marked by anger over a whole range of issues, argues Fücks. "The Vietnam War, the American civil rights movement, the struggle against the colonial system in Southern Africa, the events in Czechoslovakia and the Chinese counter-revolution either outraged or inspired hundreds of thousands of activists; they fired imaginations and became the basis of action," Fücks writes.[21]

Social Movement Theory

Social Movement Theory argues that rhetoric is a key element to understanding the processes of social change because a shared rhetoric leads to shared behaviors and actions, which creates group cohesion and self-identification through group identity. To Swidler rhetoric plays an important role in social movement because a culture's system of shared language creates understanding among members of the culture. Therefore, changing those meaning is a form of cultural rebellion.[22] "The trick for activists is to bridge public discourse and people's experiential knowledge, integrating them in a coherent frame that supports and sustains collective action," writes Gamson.[23]

The demonstrations of the 1960s occurred around the world and on hundreds of college campuses in the United States. Protests against the War in Vietnam and the Civil Rights movement were the focus of many demonstrations. However, local issues often were the catalyst for demonstrations, e.g. against Dow Chemical at University of Wisconsin or tearing down low income housing at Columbia University, or university reform in Paris, or anti-Franco demonstrations in Spain. An emotional connection invoked by shared music or similar musical experiences unified the wide range of demonstrations and protesters.

Just an analysis of the demonstrations and events during the 1960s would seem to lead to the conclusion that each demonstration was a case of spontaneous combustion, i.e. that each demonstration occurred because of local conditions. The CIA concluded that there was no international or national organization behind the worldwide demonstrations. The CIA concluded that "restless" youth were motivated by an idealistic dissatisfaction with contemporary politics and social systems.[24]

Music became the voice for the dissatisfied because music created a context where people came together for collective action. Rosenthal and Flacks contend that "...music accompanies political struggles in much of the recorded and oral history of most of the world's societies...."[25] Music becomes part of self-identification, explain Rosenthal and Flacks, because music unites the self with group identification.[26] The rhetoric of social transformation requires poetry, argues Burke, because poetry is not just an "exercise," but an act that translates "political controversy to high theologic terms...."[27] "The range of images that can be used for concretizing the process of transformation is limited only by the imagination and ingenuity of poets," explains Burke.[28] During the 1960s, the poets of the social movements were sometimes the musicians. "In the 1960s, popular culture and social movements merged together to a certain degree," explains Siegfried. "Music largely defined the emotional character of protest movements while also lowering the entrance threshold for those youth who did not start out politically interested."[29]

People who listened to the music of the 1960s and shared in the "emotional character" of

the music became part of the protest movement because they shared in the empathetic resonance. Empathetic Resonance (Bertelsen , 1996; Lynch, 1998; Adams-Price, 1998; Adams-Price, et al., 2006; Goodman, 2010) theorizes that when audience members share emotions with the performers and with other audience members that creates group unity and a dialectical connection with the actor. The emotion creates a sense of truth shared by performers and the audience. When empathetic resonance occurs, people feel like they belong to a group.[30] That group cohesion occurs because participants share empathy with each other.[31] The shared experiences mean that the artistic work seems "genuine," explains Adams-Price.[32] Goodman concluded that empathetic resonance explains group identity among Facebook groups.[33] In applying empathetic resonance to film, Adams-Price, et al. found that "When [Meryl] Streep creates an emotional bond with the audience, they psychologically become part of the story."[34]

If songs generated a shared emotional experience, the result could be a rhetorical vision.[35] In the context of music, a rhetorical vision occurs when a song unites people together in agreement with the ideology of the social movement. "[V]erbal and nonverbal communication" can create a sense of shared goals and dreams of a future circumstance when people become participants "in the drama," explains Bormann.[36] The result is that people without a common background create a common culture. Bormann indicates people sharing a rhetorical vision also share a similar "psyschodynamics" and a "preoccupation" with a set of issues.[37] "A member dramatizes a theme that catches the group and causes it to chain out because it hits a common psychodynamic chord or a hidden agenda item or their common difficulties vis-à-vis the natural environment, the socio-political systems, or the economic structures," writes Bormann. "The group grows excited, involved, more dramas chain out to create a common symbolic reality filled with heroes and villains."[38]

Music was the rhetoric that created some sense of unity among participants in social movement of the 1960s. Bob Dylan served as the poet predicted by Burke's concept of the poet because Dylan's songs became a unifying force into the wide and varied reality of the protest movements of the 1960s. This paper analyzes Dylan's music in search of the rhetoric that invoked the empathetic resonance and rhetorical vision that unified the disparate social reform movements of the 1960s. As the prophet, Dylan's lyrics, performances, and music were a unifying force in the social movement of the 1960s. Accordingly, understanding Dylan's rhetoric provides insight into how rhetoric unifies people together behind social movements.

Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan arrived in New York in the winter of 1961. He entered the folk scene of Greenwich Village and became very popular within the left wing "beatniks" of the early 60s. During this time Dylan wrote some of his most influential protest music—"Blowin' In The Wind", "The Times They Are A-Changin'", "Masters of War," and a host of other songs that revealed and condemned an unjust and racially divided nation that was on the verge nuclear holocaust.

In 1965, Dylan traded his acoustic and folk music fame for an electric guitar and a band. As a result, he was "booed" vehemently at the Newport Folk festival where it is rumored Pete Seeger threatened to cut the electrical cords that powered Dylan's newly formed amplifiers and sound system. Although he only performed three songs with his band, it was obvious that his destiny was seeking other places. After the Newport Folk Festival Dylan returned to the recording studio accompanied by musicians and electrical instruments. During this period, he recorded his famous three-album trilogy consisting of

Highway 61 Revisited, *Bringing it all Back Home*, and *Blonde on Blonde*. This triumvirate of music initiated a new music called folk rock—a synthesis of Modern Folk music and postmodern surrealistic rock music that led to an even more displaced and radicalized social movement.

By the end of 1967, America and Western Europe were spiraling into the abyss of social, political, and cultural turmoil. Traditions and previous assumptions were being discarded—a new generation was spinning toward the vortex of collective passion, united change, and often-violent rage against a venerable post war society. Mark Lytle labels these post war years as the "era of conformity and consensus" or better known as the "Consensus Society."[39] The influence of Bob Dylan's music challenged this "consensus society" and, as a result, created a paradigm of postmodern self-discovery. His lyrics identified the "confused, accused, misused, strung-out ones and worse...every hung-up person in the whole wide universe,"[40] who began to mutiny and abandon the social dreadnoughts of conformity and set sail for a trip upon Dylan's "magic swirling ship." His music changed the landscape of social and political conformity and laid the foundation for the revolutionary turbulence of the late 1960s.

Social movements require a shared rhetoric. That shared rhetoric can be created by the prophet—a role played by Bob Dylan in the youth unrest that came to fruition in 1968. According to Milman Parry, oral prophesy is likely to contain "riddles, puns, sound-plays, rhetorical questions and dialogues that are marks of performance by a speaker trying to engage and hold the audience." Dylan posed the questions and his audience "drew their conclusions on the wall" in the form of rebellion against all aspects of traditionalism and conventionality.[41] Brown argues that Dylan "is not a prophet that brings the hope of renewal. Rather, he delivers a blunt confrontation with reality that is stripped of blinding ideological fantasy."[42] Lynskey (2011) agrees, identifying Dylan as the "prophet" of disaffected youth.[43] Unquestionably, Dylan's influence transformed the cultural and philosophical attitudes of post war modernity—as result, a new generation of youthful surrogates became engulfed in the surrealistic enlightenment of music, meaning and empathy. By 1966, his orphaned folk idealism had morphed into a postmodern disillusionment that especially resonated with a restless and displaced society, livid with injustice and living on the brink of nuclear annihilation.

The music Dylan created from the early to mid-sixties prefaced the rebellion that would "shake the windows and rattle the wall" ("The Times They Are A-Changin'") of traditional American culture and values. As a poet, lyrist, and musician, Dylan was out of the Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie tradition, but nothing like his music had been heard before. His nasal voice and whining harmonica demanded and received immediate attention; songs such as "Blowin' In The Wind", "It's a Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall", and "The Times They Are A-Changin'" foreshadowed the ominous clouds that were blowing disorder and change. Jacques Attali's (1985) points out "music is prophecy...[It] makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible."[44] (10). In the foreword of Attali's book, Jameson (1985) contends that Attali's "Noise" theory has within it the "possibility of a superstructure to anticipate historical developments, to foreshadow new social formations in prophetic and annunciatory way."[45] Referencing Plato, Attali qualitatively affirmed that, "the modes of music are never disturbed without the unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions."[46] Through the lens of modernity, Attali concurs, "every major social rupture has been preceded by an essential mutation in the code of music."[47] In fact, Attali was the first to point out that the prophetic "noise" created by Dylan's early protest songs set the stage for social changes.

Civil Rights and Social Equality Prophecy

Bob Dylan is "first and foremost an oral poet and a literary figure."[48] His most notable achievements in the early 1960s were his involvement with the civil rights movement.

"Blowin' In The Wind" fired the early shots of the left-wing folk scene when he addressed such as issues as war, peace, and universal civil rights. The song contains a wealth of open-ended questions that suggest prophecy and time. Dylan interrogates the audience:

– How many roads must a man walk down Before you call him a man?
– Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail Before she sleeps in the sand?
– Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannonballs fly Before they're forever banned?
– How many years can a mountain exist Before it's washed to the sea?
– Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist Before they're allowed to be free?
– Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head Pretending he just doesn't see?
– How many times must a man look up Before he can see the sky?
– Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have Before he can hear people cry?
– Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows That too many people have died?

The lyrics challenge the audience to decide what society must do to achieve racial equality and peace, for disarmament, and to create a world of human dignity. In many ways the song is prophetic. The song offers no definitive answers—however, Dylan does suggest that change will eventually come. In fact, he analogizes the "answers" to a restless piece of paper blowing down a deserted street—a piece of paper that must one day stop and rest somewhere ("Letter" 7). The questions Dylan asks demand soul searching answers. Reactions and solutions within the folk community requested a call to arms. The battle would be fought in the "no man's land" of impatience and cultural insurrection. Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind" set the stage for the idealistic transformation from modern cold war culture to the postmodern consciousness of equity and non-conformity. Gregg Campbell confirms this prophetic change by stating, "Release, justification and salvation can only be achieved through the total destruction, not only of the oppressors, but of the entire society."[49] Campbell further crowns Dylan as a spokesman of the counter-culture—the creator of "equitable and humane society."[50] "Blowin' In The Wind" would initiate the revolution that would eventually come to a head in the late 1960s—however; conversely, the song would also propagate the emotive request for empathy and understanding, which would characterize his songs.

Anti-War Prophecy

Dylan's "It's a Hard Rains A Gonna Fall" exposed the fragility of a world facing imminent nuclear war. Christine Jones (2013) describes the song as overflowing "with apocalyptic imagery reminiscent of Old-Testament prophecy, as it foretells the destruction of the world by flood."[51] (1). "Hard Rain" projected surrealistic consequences of atomic weapons leashed out upon an innocent world. To add to Dylan's ambiguity, he claimed he wrote the song in segments, but because of the Cuban Missile conflict and the imminent possibility of nuclear war, he stated, "I thought I wouldn't have time to write all those songs so I put all I could into this one." However, later he denounced the song's meaning by saying, "No, it's not atomic rain, it's just a hard rain. I mean some sort of end that's just gotta happen."[52]

Nevertheless, it added to the apocalyptic appetite that was forming as a result of rebellion against the post war status quo. According to Todd Gitlin, Dylan's futuristic

vision collided with the older generation who saw the nuclear weapons as peacekeepers, equalizers. Dylan and his generation saw it as a "shadow hanging over all human endeavor."[53] Writer Ian Macdonald concludes by stating that- "Hard Rain" is "one of the most idiosyncratic protest songs ever written."[54]

Idiosyncratic can also be a term easily applied to Bob Dylan, as most great artist are usually accused of idiosyncrasies. Most importantly, however, "Hard Rain" became a conduit to a mass audience that was ready to escape the dark tunnels of conformity and tradition. In fact, it connected emotionally and exponentially with the body politic of folk leaders who were, at the right time, seeking leadership in an empathic new world. James Dunlap argues "folk music could be used in ways to serve either individual emotional needs, on the one hand, or... definable social and political objectives, on the other."[55]

Youth Rebellion Prophecy

It is obvious that Dylan's protest music called for a new society, one that was brought about by the many social and political changes to the American landscape in the 1960s and into the 1970s. His unique style created a collective consciousness that would seek to challenge and eradicate the materialistic, racial, cultural, and political injustices that existed in the early 1960s. Dylan's prophetic masterpiece "The Times They Are A Changin" was a warning to the status quo and a summons for youthful rebellion. His messianic injunction to "gather around people wherever you roam" and listen—and "don't speak too soon for the wheel still in spin." His commands require immediate scrutiny of the old world. Warnings and admonishments are apparent and imminent—"he that gets hurt will be who has stalled; there's a battle outside and its ragin". "Times" employs the 2nd person "You" and "your" an inordinate number of times—it issues personal warnings such as "you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone" and that "your old road is rapidly fading." The song ignited the fires of revolt and cynicism, especially among the youth. It welded together the issues of equality, anti-war, and youthful rebellion and formed the true "counterculture" that would turn to drugs, love, peace, and anti establishment's ideals.

Dylan critic Christine Jones succinctly points out that in "Times," "Dylan takes on the role of the prophet in appealing to the conscience of a people, with injunctions to 'admit that the waters around you have grown,' 'accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bond' and "start swimming or you'll sink like a stone."[56] His continuing prophecy is also addressed to the establishment when he indicates "Senators and Congressmen," "Mother's and Father's throughout the land", and "writers and critics." In fact, "Times" challenges all aspects of post-war society. As a prophetic visionary, Dylan not only rearranges certain ideas, he brings forth an entire set of new ones—ideas that would attract disaffected generation of youth. According to Attali, musicians prophesize change— and Dylan's vision, although somewhat apocalyptic, sought to bring overthrow and replacement to the old social order.

"Chimes of Freedom" also propagated the chronic youth rebellion that was staggering in an attempt to find itself. As its title proposes, it is a song about individual freedom—a freedom that included "warriors", "refugees", the "underdog soldier" and "every hung up person." "Chimes" was reminiscent of Woody's Guthrie's home spun philosophical idea of universal rights. However, Dylan takes freedom to an almost Christ-like intensity to include all those who exist on and off the margins of society. "Chimes of Freedom" employs New Testament rhetoric to prophesize how the "rake," the "luckless," "the forsaken," "the deaf and blind," "faceless and voiceless" and "the mistitled prostitute" can be regenerated

through "individual redemption and personal freedom."[57] "Chimes of Freedom" was in fact the beginning of the Dylan's surrealistic journey into the unknown of what Jones described as the "deconstruction of enlightenment."[58]

Postmodern Prophecy and Revolution

According to Jones, "Dylan was instrumental in creating the changes to come in popular music, and because his early songs both prophesied and accompanied social changes," he was subsequently crowned with the title of the "voice of a generation," a title he very much disregarded.[59] By the mid 1960s, Dylan's anti-conformity march was becoming very attractive to a post-war generation who, until then, sought rationality over self-expression. Dylan's prophecy became hyper-eclectic with expressiveness and personal freedom—the genesis of a collective identity of youthful rebellion. In 1965, Dylan began his trilogy of albums that mixed folk music with the electrical accompaniment of a band—a synthesis that justified the appellation of "Folk Rock." The triumvirate recordings of Bringing it all Back Home, followed by, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blond on Blond* fashioned a surrealistic shift that was popular with the imminent drug culture of the mid 1960s. Lyrics such as "take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind, down the foggy ruins of time" and "Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, fighting in the captains tower, while Calypso singers laugh at them, and fishermen hold flowers" formed a fresh artistic meaning for the rebellious youth who had previously lived in a world dominated by rote rationality.

Folk world questions on social equality and anti-war rhetoric took a back seat to parody, satire, and surrealism—social questions are eliminated and replaced by declarations. His triumvirate (*Subterranean Homesick Blues*, *Highway 61* Revisited, and *Blonde on Blonde*, propelled Dylan into the stratosphere of prophet/philosopher, His rhetoric is now formed in axioms:

– there is no success in failure, and that failure is no success at all,
– even a pawn must hold a grudge
– it don't take a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows
– you know something is happening here, but you don't know what it is—do you Mr. Jones?

These lyrics bounce through the desolation of T.S. Elliot's Wasteland, and resonate with a restless and dissatisfied youth. Furthermore, Dylan would propagate a more philosophical polished prophecy that directly confronted the established consensus of post World War II thought. For example, in "It's all Right Ma" he employs quasi biblical proverbs such as "the masters make the rules for the wise men and the fools"; apocalyptic imagery such as "Darkness at the Break of Noon," "Eclipses both the sun and moon", and musical metaphor of horns that play "wasted words proves to warn that he not busy being born is busy dying." *Highway 61 Revisited* was in many ways the catalysts for the oblique implementation of the "tune in, turn on, drop out" mantra propagated by Timothy Leary in 1967. "Turn on" essentially dealt with in the activation of inner consciousness of one's being (usually aligned to the use of drugs). "Drop Out" generally meant, "self- reliance, a discovery of one's...commitment to mobility, choice, and change" (often misconstrued as "Get stoned and abandon all constructive activity"). Within the lyrics of *Highway 61 Revisited*, Dylan employed tropes such as "Napoleon in rags"; "Cinderella she seems so easy"; "God said to Abraham/kill me a son/Abe says man you must be putting me on"; to propagate a surreal world. Throughout the album, Dylan masterfully, and metaphorically, creates a

wide variety of emotional and figurative imagery that intensified the fading reality of social consensus and moral inclinations of generations to come. In fact, *Highway 61 Revisited* relegated materialistic realism to the rich and powerful—the same fearful foe the young would clash with in 1968.

Blond on Blond, the last album of Dylan's triumvirate, was released in May of 1966. The album presented the end of the beginning of postmodern tribulation that would "soon shake the windows and rattle the walls/for the times" they were changing. His prophetic message in this album was essentially that there was no message—only surreal declarations and unanswerable questions. His recurring chorus in "Stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis blues Again" was that "oh Mama/can this really be the end?" In some ways *Blond on Blond* represented the end of era. Lyrics in the song "Visions of Johanna" reveal the declivity of a generation waiting... "We sit here stranded, though we're all doing our best to deny it"; "We can hear the night watchman click his flashlight...ask himself if it's him or them that's insane..." and "voices echo this is what salvation must be like after a while." As the voice of a generation, Dylan's prophecy has now become the "ghost of 'lectricity'" lingering on the edge of dramatic change as he declares "these visions of Johanna are now all that remain."

Blond on Blond manifest Dylan's brilliant use of imagistic scenes and tropes— "Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues"; "When the jelly faced women all sneeze" are just two examples from "Visions of Johanna." Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Dylan wrote some of his most bizarre imagery for this album. For example the songs "I Want You" and "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis blues again" include a repertoire of odd, but almost "true to life" characters that leaps ("The drunken Politician leaps"), sighs, (The guilty undertaker sighs) and says ("When Ruthie says come see me in her honky-tonk lagoon")—in fact, the characters and their actions on this album become a corroded society that prophesied the end of the beginning.

In July 1966, Dylan, for the most part, disappeared. His famous "motorcycle crash" sent him into a self-imposed obscurity. However, in 1967, he returned with his "country western" influenced album "John Wesley Harding." The album featured one the most tumultuous songs of the pre 1968 era—"All Along the Watchtower." The song manifest the haunting image of what was about to happen. However, for his part, his declaration spoke to a generation on the brink of destruction, "there must be some kind of way out of here." From there, Dylan's prophecy is history.

It is obvious that Dylan's protest music called for a new society, one that was brought about by the many social and political changes to the American landscape in the 1960s and into the 1970s. However, it was his shift from the folk music to rock that caused the ultimate volatile climate that would characterize the turmoil of the later part of the decade. After his appearance at the Newport folk festival, all empathy was shattered among the loyal followers of his early folk days. However, the noise he created would many times overshadow the "boos" that would howled on that day. The move from modern to postmodern is most obvious in Dylan's shift from folk to rock. No one was prepared for the emotional response that was caused by his postmodern transition into a world of displacement, dysfunction, and disillusionment that was witnessed in the mid 1960s. His unique style created a collective consciousness that would seek to challenge and eradicate the racial, cultural, and political injustices that existed in the early 1960s.

Conclusion

Dylan challenged people through his music to question the social order, to evaluate whether government was serving the social good, to consider the role of leaders to bring social reform that produced more individual freedom and dignity to the individual. Because Dylan played that rhetorical role in the 1960s, he is considered a prophet, earning a Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016.

Scholarship could consider the role of other prophets in rhetorical processes of social reform in the 1960s. The rhetorical role of the Students for a Democratic Society, Martin Luther King, President John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, President Richard Nixon, the Black Panthers, and many others were prophets who spoke the rhetoric that created empathetic resonance, rhetorical visions, and ideology that motivated adherents to their positions.

Perhaps prophets are required for social reform groups to be successful advocates for change. If so, then Teddy Roosevelt, Robert La Follett, and Franklin Roosevelt were the prophets of the Progressive Movement. William Jennings Bryan could be the prophet of the Populist and Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas of abolition.

However, what may be unique to social change in the 1960s was the role of music. Songs have often been part of social movements, as many of the authors we have cited point out. Woody Guthrie became famous for his music during the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s. However, the music was not the force that motivated social change, but a reflection of the commonality of people who believed in the cause of labor justice. "We Shall Overcome" was adopted by the Civil Rights Movement, but was not a rhetorical element that brought people to the movement. Uniquely, music in the 1960s was the voice of the social movements and the rhetoric that created self identity through group identification.

Notes

[1] https://9marks.org/article/the-american-jeremiad-a-bit-of-perspective-on-the-rhetoric-of-decline/

[2] Todd Gitlin. *The Sixties: Years of hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987): 29.

[3] Charles Kaiser. *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation.* (New York: Grove Press, 1988): xxiv.

[4] Dorian Lynskey. *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, From Billie Holiday to Green Day.* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011): 52.

[5] Lawrence Chenoweth. "The Rhetoric of Hope and Despair: A Study of the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the Jefferson Airplane." *American Quarterly, 23*(1971): 34. I messed this up, the title should be in quotation marks.

[6] David Maraniss. *They Marched Into Sunlight. War and Peace: Vietnam and America, October 1967.* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003): 79.

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